



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF GOETHE'S WERTHER.

A consideration of the English translations of *Werther* may well be prefaced by an account of certain influences and ideas which were prevalent at the time of its introduction.

Goethe was first brought to the attention of the English public in 1779 through a translation of *Werther*. From that year until the end of the century, it is no exaggeration to say that his fame in England rested exclusively upon that work. While *Werther* was widely read and admired, it caused much agitation. In England, as in Germany, there were those who saw nothing in it but an apology for suicide,¹ and proceeded to oppose the general reception of the book on the grounds that it was immoral and could exert only an evil influence. Much of the reason for this interpretation may be accounted for by the temper of the eighteenth century English mind.

Goethe, in discussing the general character of *Werther*² and the unfavorable reception which it was accorded, calls attention to the unusual number of English poems in the eighteenth century which present a gloomy weariness of life. He makes special mention of Young's *Night Thoughts*, Gray's *Elegy*, and the poetry of Thomas Warton³ and of Ossian, all of which, according to Goethe, are pervaded with a spirit of melancholy and gloom that had exerted its influence on the public. Thus, as he tells us, "this feeling was so general that *Werther* produced its great effect precisely because it struck a chord everywhere, and openly and intelligibly exhibited the internal nature of a morbid delusion." Goethe seems to have hit upon a phase of mind which manifested itself in interest in self-destruction. That a feeling toward England akin to Goethe's became rather general, may be seen in several references in the course of the century.

¹ Cf. Appell, *Werther u. seine Zeit*; Braun, *Goethe im Urtheile seiner Zeitgenossen*, I.

² *Dichtung u. Wahrheit*, Book XIII.

³ A part of Warton's poem, *The Suicide*, is quoted, showing "how accurately the English were acquainted with this spirit before the appearance of *Werther*."

Montesquieu, in his *Esprit des Lois*,⁴ says: "les Anglaises se tuent sans qu'on puisse imaginer aucune raison qui les détermine; ils se tuent dans le sein même du bonheur;" and in England attempts were made by David Hume and others to defend suicide.

During a large part of the century suicide must have been of common occurrence,⁵ for when the first English version of *Werther* appeared, the author stated in his preface that the design of the book was to "exhibit a picture of that disordered state of mind too common in our own country;" and similarly, the author of the second English version in discussing *Werther* said: "You see him in that distracted state of mind so common to our own country, that we are proverbially the jest and pity of foreign nations."

The general character of *Werther*, then, dealing so conspicuously with the theme of suicide, seems to have renewed interest in a subject with which readers were generally familiar. Although in England only one case of suicide is recorded which was apparently caused by the influence of *Werther*,⁶ the growing acquaintance with the book undoubtedly furnished an impetus to frequent discussion of the subject.

In 1790 Charles Moore published in two volumes *A Full Inquiry into the Subject of Suicide*, which was reviewed with extracts in the *Analytical Review*⁷ of that year. In the course of his discussion Moore cited the evil tendencies of *Werther*. He also attacked men like Hume, who had defended the practice of suicide, and argued that the defenders of the act were deserving of more censure than those who practiced it. He further stated: "The practice of suicide in this island has been so much to exceed that in other

⁴ Book XIV, Chapter 12.

⁵ As early as 1745, Gresset, in his three-act comedy, *Sidnei*, ridiculed the practice of suicide in England. The hero, an Englishman named Sidnei, attempts to poison himself, but is foiled in his efforts by his servant who substitutes a harmless potion. Cf. Erich Schmidt, *Richardson, Rousseau and Goethe*. Cf. also Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, XVII.

⁶ The *Gentleman's Magazine* in November, 1784, published under its obituary the following notice: "Suddenly at the Chaceside, Southgate, Miss Glover, daughter of the late Mr. G., formerly an eminent dancing master. The *Sorrows of Werter* were found under her pillow, a circumstance which deserves to be known, in order, if possible, to defeat the evil tendency of that pernicious work." *Gent. Mag.* LIV, p. 876.

⁷ *Anal. Rev.* (1790) VI, p. 402; VIII, p. 517.

nations, as to have made the English almost proverbially noted for their giving away to so horrid a custom."

In 1791 the *European Magazine*⁸ gave a long review of and extracts from M. Zimmermann's *Solitude considered with respect to its Influence on the Mind and Heart*. In the course of the review the author wrote: "The short introduction to a work of uncommon merit would be deficient if we did not conclude it with a declaration that it is the best preservative against suicide, that epidemic disease before hinted at, which, unfortunately, from the frequent instances of it amongst us, is denominated throughout the continent of Europe, *The English Malady*.—O my countrymen, for heaven's sake! wipe out this foul national reproach, let it not any longer be a melancholy truth that foreign writers, whether divines, philosophers, or historians of the present century, especially of late years, when treating of the horrid crime of suicide, refer their readers to England."

The *Monthly Mirror*⁹ in 1796, in a lengthy discussion of suicide, stated: "The frequent suicides which fill the daily journals, occasioned by other motives than those of patriotism and charity, but despoiled love, must shock the mind of every reflecting reader and call forth the most acute sensation of pity and contempt of the boasted reason and wisdom of mankind."

From these extracts it will be seen that suicide was a matter of more or less common discussion among English writers, particularly in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and it seems reasonable to suppose that, since Goethe's novel, which was in many quarters taken as an apology for suicide, was first translated in 1779, and since previously to that date self-destruction had not figured largely in contributions to English magazines, the aggravation of interest was occasioned by the *Sorrows of Werther*.

Before its appearance in England three French versions¹⁰ of the novel had been published, and the general favor in which

⁸ *Europ. Mag.* (1791) XX, p. 184.

⁹ *Month. Mirror* (1796) II, p. 329.

¹⁰ The first known French translation of *Werther* appeared at Erlangen in 1776, by B. S. d. S. (Baron S. de Seckendorff) under the title: *Les Souffrances du jeune Werther, en deux Parties*. A second translation, *Werther, traduit de l'Allemande*, by G. Deyverdun, appeared at Maestricht in 1776, and a third, *Les Passions du jeune Werther*, by M. Aubry, appeared at Manheim in 1777. Besides these the British Museum Catalogue mentions an earlier version,

the work was held in France recommended it to the English public. Moreover, the book appeared in England at a time of demand for the sentimental works of Richardson and Rousseau, and naturally the literary conditions which prevailed were such as to favor the introduction of a work of its character. This is attested by the fact that during the last two decades of the century no other German production was translated so frequently and called forth so many imitations.

Thus, in spite of the deprecation of suicide in which many writers indulge, *Werther* with its "horrid" ending took such a hold upon the reading public that the following editions were necessary to supply the demand:

The Sorrows of Werter, a German Story founded on Fact. London, 1779.

Werter and Charlotte. A German Story. Translated from the last Leipsic edition. Illustrated with notes. London, 1786.

The Sorrows of Werter. A German Story. Translated from the genuine French edition of M. Aubry, by John Gifford, Esq. London, 1789.

The Letters of Werter. Ludlow, 1799.

The Sorrows of Werter, translated from the German of Baron Goethe, by William Render, D. D. London, 1801.

The Sorrows of Werter, translated from the German of Baron Goethe. By Frederick Gotzberg, assisted by an English literary Gentleman. London, 1802.

The Sorrows of Werter. From the German of Baron Goethe. A new translation revised and compared with all the former editions. The second edition. By Dr. Pratt. London, 1809.

The Sorrows of Young Werther. Translated by R. Dillon Boylan. London, 1854.¹¹

Werther, traduit de l'Allemande, Paris, 1774, of which nothing seems to be known. Cf. Goedeke, *Grundriss*, IV, 3; Baldensperger, *Goethe en France*; Suepfle, *Goethes Literarischer Einfluss auf Frankreich*, *Goethe Jahrbuch*, VIII.

¹¹ Goedeke, *Grundriss*, IV, 3, gives the most complete list of these translations. Cf. also Oswald, *Goethe in England and America*, *Publ. Eng. Goethe Soc.*, XI, and Appell, *Werter u. seine Zeit*. Goedeke records another translation, "*The Sorrows of Werter*; a pathetic story. Translated from the German of Baron Goethe. London, Dean & Munday, 1816." This translation is not listed by any other accessible authority, and is apparently not to be had.

Attention may also be called to George Ticknor's translation of *Werther*. Ticknor, (*Life*, *Letters*, and *Journals* of George Ticknor, Boston, 1826, I, p. 11), in describing the difficulties he had in learning German, states: "I also obtained a copy of Goethe's *Werther* in German (through Mr. William Shaw's connivance) from amongst Mr. J. Q. Adam's books, deposited by him on going to Europe, in the Athenaeum, under Mr. Shaw's care, but without giving him permission to use them. I got so far as to write a translation of *Werther*, but no farther." After an investigation of Ticknor's available manuscripts, I have not been able to find his translation.

The first translation was published anonymously in 1779¹², but has been ascribed to Daniel Malthus.¹³ Not a great deal is known concerning the life and writings of Malthus. The *Dictionary of National Biography* mentions him only in an account of the life of his son, Thomas Robert Malthus, the political economist. He was born in 1730, wrote some useful but anonymous books, was an ardent believer in the perfectibility of mankind as expounded by Condorcet and Godevin; and some peculiar opinions about education were perhaps derived from Rousseau's *Emile*. No mention is made of his translation of *Werther*.

In determining the authorship of this translation a statement by Malthus's son, Thomas Robert Malthus, has generally been overlooked. The *Gentleman's Magazine*,¹⁴ in March, 1800, printed the following: "We feel pleasure in correcting our own errors as well as those of others, and shall make no apology for transcribing from the *Monthly Magazine* of March last, the following letter respecting the character, etc., of Daniel Malthus Esq. 'Sir, I shall esteem it a particular favour, if you will allow me to correct an erroneous paragraph which appeared in your obituary for last month. Daniel Malthus Esq. is there mentioned as the translator of some pieces from the German and French. I can say from certain knowledge that he did not translate them. The turn of his mind very little disposed him to imitation, or to the copying in any way the works of others. Whatever he wrote was drawn from the original source of his own fine understanding and genius; but from his singular, unostentatious, and retired character, and his constant desire to shun everything that might attract notice, will probably never be known as his.—T. Robert Malthus.' "

While this statement does not preclude a translation of *Werther*, it leaves one in doubt as to the authorship of the first English version.

¹² R. G. Alford, *Publ. Eng. Goethe Society*, VII, p. 9, is in error when he gives 1780 as the year of the first translation of *Werther*.

¹³ The *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain* (Hackett & Laing, III, p. 245) records this translation by Malthus in 1779. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, in February, 1800, states: "Mr. Malthus was the admired though hitherto unknown translator of the *Sorrows of Werter*. "Cf. also Goodnight, *German Literature in American Magazines prior to 1846*, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Gent. Mag.* LXX, (1800), p. 177.

The author of this first translation published the following preface: "Those who expect a novel will be disappointed in this work, which contains few characters and few events; and the design of which is to exhibit a picture of that disordered state of mind too common in our own country. It is drawn from the masterly hand of Mr. Goethe, and is perhaps little more than a relation of a fact which happened within his knowledge. It went through several editions in German, and soon made its way into France. About two years since, the English translator met with it; and, being struck with the uncommon genius and originality of the thoughts, and the energy with which they are expressed, translated some of the letters from the French; and led on by the beauty of the work, which increased in proportion as it was attended to, the whole was insensibly finished; and, as no translation from the German has hitherto appeared, it is now offered to the public.

"Among the number of pamphlets which this little work gave occasion to, there were not wanting some which censured it; and Mr. Goethe has been called the apologist of suicide by those, who, not distinguishing the author from the work, very absurdly ascribed to him the erroneous sentiments which he has given to his principal character—a method of criticism which would equally affect all the epic and tragic writers that ever existed.

"Werter appears to have been strongly impressed with sentiments of religion; and it is not to be wondered at, that in his state of mind they should take an irregular form, and sometimes border upon extravagance. A few expressions which had this appearance have been omitted in the French, and a few more by the English translator, as they might possibly give offence in a work of this nature."

From the author's preface it becomes clear that *Werther* was introduced to the English public through the French, "ein Beweis mehr," says Appell,¹⁵ "wie selten die Kenntniss des Deutschen damals noch in England anzutreffen war." Malthus made the translation from the French version, *Les Passions du jeune Werther*, which, as Suepfle¹⁶ points out, perhaps accounts for *Sorrows* in

¹⁵ Appell, p. 12.

¹⁶ Suepfle, *Beiträge zur Gesch. der d. Lit. in England, Ztscht. für Vergleich. Littgesch.*, VI, p. 311.

the English title for *Leiden*.¹⁷ Aubry's French version is, on the whole, a fairly accurate and faithful rendering of the original. With the exception of the greater part of the passage from Ossian, there are practically no serious omissions of the text. However, it is to be regretted that *Werther* was first introduced to the English through Malthus's version from the French. Naturally one would not expect Goethe's meaning to be conveyed with the same richness of expression by a foreigner, even in translating directly from the German; but coming through the medium of the French, an unusual lack of the force of the original is inevitable. Then, Malthus injured Goethe's novel as a work of art and also his reputation as a translator by mutilating the text. For instance, one letter¹⁸ is omitted entirely, which contains the story of Frau M. and her stingy husband who has confined her to a very small weekly allowance. There is no obvious reason why this letter should have been omitted, for there is apparently no bit of sentiment attached which should warrant its omission, and no serious difficulties are presented in interpreting it, though slight variations are met with on comparing several translations. Of course, it may be possible that Malthus thought this letter had no intimate connection with the main thread of the story, or that Frau M's reference to confessing before her "eternal judge" was too "extravagant." The anonymous translators of 1786 and of 1799, and Gifford omitted this letter, but all other translators included it.

Another serious omission is the account of Werther's meeting with Charlotte and her sisters at the spring, of the crying child, of Charlotte's motherly care, and of Werther's report of the incident to a friend, all of which constitutes the greater part of one letter.¹⁹ Remembering Malthus's statement in the preface concerning Werther's "sentiments of religion," we may surmise his reason for omitting this part of the story. He very likely thought it tended, partially at least, to "border upon extravagance," and may have wished to exclude it from his readers. He may have regarded the tone of Werther's words as repugnant to English feelings, thinking that Goethe speaks too lightly of things divine.

¹⁷ Cf. Crabb Robinson, *Conversations with Goethe in August 1829*, (Diary, II, p. 493). "He was surprised when I told him that the Sorrows of Werther was a mistranslation—*sorrow* being *Kummer*—*Leiden* is *sufferings*."

¹⁸ Book I, July 11.

¹⁹ Book I, July 6.

It is also possible that he did not understand Goethe's meaning sufficiently to give an intelligent translation. The anonymous translators of 1786 and of 1799 also omitted this part of the story.

There are several other omissions in the story, most of them brief and not especially serious, but they are apparently excuseless, and the author's liberty with the text can scarcely be justified. One may judge from his preface and from the general character of the parts omitted that *Werther* became partially an ethical problem to Malthus more through consideration for the public than for himself. Nearly all of the passage from Ossian is omitted, though Malthus gives more of it than does Aubry, who explains in a note that he did not attempt to translate Ossian because of his respect for Goethe, and because he regarded it as an interruption in the main thread of the story. Malthus naturally follows the English version of Ossian.²⁰

Numerous passages in Malthus's version show how he struggled with the text. Sometimes he fails to give an adequate rendering of the meaning, as the following specimen will show:

"Denn man rede von Selbständigkeit was man will, den will ich sehn der dulden kann, dass Schurken über ihn reden, wenn sie eine Prise über ihn haben. Wenn ihr Geschwätz leer ist, ach! da kann man sie leicht lassen."

"Qu'on dise ce qu'on voudra de la modération, je voudrais voir celui qui peut souffrir que des gredins glosent sur son compte, lorsqu'ils ont sur lui quelque prise. Quand leurs propos sont sans fondement, ah! l'on peut alors ne pas s'en mettre en peine."

"Say what you will of philosophy and fortitude: one may laugh at nonsense that has no foundation, but how is it possible to endure that these paltry rascals should have any hold of one?"²¹

At times he also amplifies the original, as in the following:

"Ich möchte mir oft die Brust zerreißen und das Gehirn einstossen, dass man einander so wenig sein kann."

"Je me déchirerois le sein, je me brûlerois la cervelle, quand je vois combien peu les hommes trouvent de ressources les uns dans les autres."

"I could tear open my bosom. I could beat my head against the wall, when I see how difficult it is to communicate our ideas, our sensations to others to make them enter entirely into our feelings."²²

²⁰ The passage begins with "Alone on the sea-beat rock" etc., and is given in full with the final words in the English version, "Will none of you speak in pity? They do not regard their father. I am sad, O Carmor! Nor small my cause of woe!" which Goethe did not translate.

²¹ Book II, March 15.

²² Book II, Oct. 27.

On the other hand, one finds many parts of the novel translated rather successfully; and, though much of the form and spirit of the original is lost, when one considers that this was the first attempt to translate *Werther* into English, and that no previous translation existed by which the author might be guided, the work, on the whole, is to be commended. This may be said in spite of Carlyle's and Appell's severe criticisms.²³

Goethe praised this translation in a letter to Frau von Stein in 1783,²⁴ and so far as we know it is the only statement of his on record regarding any English version of *Werther*.

Malthus's translation did much to make *Werther* and Goethe known in England. It passed through several editions²⁵ and was reprinted oftener than any of the other English versions of *Werther*, a testimony, perhaps, to the popularity of the story rather than to the merits of the translation. Several of the letters were published in the *Hibernian Magazine*²⁶ in 1780 and in 1783. It was through this translation that *Werther* first became known to any degree in America, where at least three reprints were published between 1784 and 1798.²⁷ Until the appearance of other English versions of *Werther* here in 1807, it seems very probable that this was the only medium of acquaintance with Goethe's novel.

Several of the leading magazines reviewed this translation, but they were principally concerned with the character of the story which they criticised severely. Perhaps the author of the translation foresaw so much condemnation of the story and preferred to publish his work anonymously.

The second translation appeared anonymously in 1786 with the author's preface:

"That an original loses by translation, is obvious to every one who reads two languages; and, that this should be the particular case with the present work, is not wonderful, when we find the

²³ Carlyle, *Critical & Miscellaneous Essays*, London, 1899, I; p. 212; Appell, p. 12.

²⁴ Cf. Hans Graef, *Goethe über seine Dichtungen*, II, p. 546.

²⁵ Cf. Goedeke, *Grundriss*, IV, 3, pp. 196 f. for the most complete list of reprints which extend as late as 1852.

²⁶ *Hib. Mag.* X, pp. 308, 311; XIII, p. 305.

²⁷ Cf. Wilkens, *Early Influence of Ger. Lit. in America*, *Americana-Germanica*, III, p. 136. Cf. also F. W. C. Lieder, *Goethe in England and America*, *Journal of Eng. and Germ. Phil.* X, p. 550.

translator own himself ignorant of the original language it was written in. It is, we find, to a French copy we are indebted for the version which has been so long and so justly admired. The German has never been consulted before the present; therefore, many particulars have been omitted, according to the caprice of the two translators, which will be found to throw light upon this most affecting story. Besides leaving out whole letters, the Ode, written by Werter, and some verses which occur in other places, have been totally forgotten; perhaps, from a want of poetical imagination, to transfuse the untangible idea, inspired by the phrensy of poetical enthusiasm.

“Mr. Goethe, the author of this work, has given us little more than the particulars of a fact, which actually happened a few years since; and, as he informs us, within the circle of his own observation. It was read with applause in Germany and France; and, in short space, was many times printed. The uncommon simplicity of the story occasions it essentially to differ from a common novel, which always contains more characters, more events, and raises the expectation of the reader in proportion as the catastrophe approaches his eye. On the contrary, here is but one correspondent: it is Werter alone. You see him in that distracted situation of mind, so common to our countrymen, that we are proverbially the jest and pity of foreign nations.

“Many have supposed, and some have asserted, that Mr. Goethe was an apologist for suicide; and that his work was an attempt to vindicate what is, in itself, indefensible; but these did not distinguish the writer from his book, absurdly ascribing to him the errors and follies of his hero. By this parity of argument, we might with equal propriety arraign dramatic and epic writers for the foibles they represent in the characters they exhibit: a mode of reasoning as weak as it is fallacious.

“Bossu, a celebrated French critic, in enumerating the several requisites necessary for the formation of a hero, omits every qualification but those which constitute a handsome intelligent being. Achilles, according to Homer, is wrathful. The Devil is reputed the hero of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*; and Count Fathom is a being which most honest folks would wish to shun. But is Homer, Milton, or Smollett, to be indicted for the crimes perpetrated by the heroes of their own creation or contrivance?

"From the foregoing observation, it is not to be wondered at, if we sometimes meet with irregular ideas and sentiments of religion tinctured with extravagance. Religion had made a deep impression in the bosom of Werter; but perfection is not the lot of humanity. Nature had infused too strong a proportion of passion in his compassion: his feelings, like those of our Chatterton, were too fine to support the load of accumulated distress; and like him, his diapason closed in death. Reader! take not offence at his expressions, but return thanks to Heaven for having placed in thee a mind less susceptible of frailty, and more passive to be the behest and intent of thy Creator."

As stated in the preface, this is the first translation made directly from the German. The author has observed the first version made from the French, and besides criticising the work of his predecessor, he praises his own efforts by endeavoring to convince his readers that his version contains some particulars previously omitted which properly belong to the story. But an acquaintance with his work shows that he practically omits the same parts of the novel as Malthus, and proceeds to impose upon his readers with frequent insertions in prose and verse which he adds according to his own fancy. Like Malthus, he endeavors to suppress the belief that Goethe is an apologist of suicide, and at the same time, he is careful at the close of his preface to sound a note of warning against Werther's fate. This, together with his many moralizing footnotes and other insertions, shows that the novel was to him, as it was to many others, largely an ethical question.

The author's knowledge of German was apparently limited, for there are many instances where he fails entirely to bring out the meaning. Then, he finds difficulty in confining himself to the simplicity of Werther's language. A few specimens will serve to show the general character of his translation:

"Ubrigens find ich mich hier gar wohl. Die Einsamkeit ist meinem Herzen köstlicher Balsam in dieser paradiesischen Gegend, und diese Jahreszeit der Jugend wärmt mit aller Fülle mein oft schauerndes Herz. Jeder Baum, jede Hecke ist ein Straus von Blüten, und man möchte zur Mayenkäfer werden, um in dem Meer von Wohlgerüchen herumschweben, und alle seine Nahrung darin finden zu können."

"Nothing can be more charming to me than my situation here. Solitude has always been courted by the great and wise, and in this terrestrial paradise it is a medicine to my mind. In this soft season of the year, when the sun,

like a lusty bridegroom returns to the embraces of his bride, all nature rejoices, and every field looks gay. The zephyrs waft a balm which rejoices the heart of man, and revigorates his soul. The blithe tenants of the woods renew their matin songs, and in the evening Philomel sings a requiem to the departing day."²⁸

"Als ich jünger war, sagte sie, liebte ich nichts so sehr als die Romanen. Weiss Gott wie wohl mir's war, mich so Sonntags in ein Eckgen zu setzen, und mit ganzem Herzen an dem Glücke und Unstern einer Miss Jenny Theil zu nehmen. Ich läugne auch nicht, dass die Art noch einige Reize für mich hat. Doch da ich so selten an ein Buch komme, so müssen sie auch recht nach meinem Geschmacke seyn. Und der Autor ist mir der liebste, in dem ich meine Welt wieder finde, bey dem's zugeht wie um mich, und dessen Geschichte mir so interessant so herzlich wird, als mein eigen häuslich Leben, das freilich kein Paradies, aber doch im Ganzen eine Quelle unsäglicher Glückseligkeit ist."

"When I was young, she went on, I loved romances better than any other book I could get at. Nothing in the world could have been a greater feast for me on a holiday, than to retire into a corner, and read some affecting story or other of a romantic cast, or which had a slight tincture of the spirit of knight-errantry. By degrees I began to lose the relish for these improbable relations, and novels of a more interesting character delighted me in my leisure hours. I then entered with my whole heart and soul into all the joy and sorrow of a Miss Jenny. Grandison and Miss Harlow still have some charms for me; but as I do not read much, the books I do read, should be suited to my taste. I prefer the authors whose domestic scenes carry me not too far from my own situation in life; but where I may imagine myself, and those around me, active in the drama, and whose stories are interesting and sympathetic, like the life I lead in the bosom of my family; which, without being a real paradise, is a continual source of satisfaction and delight."²⁹

"Ist nicht vielleicht das Sehnen in mir nach Veränderung des Zustands, eine innre unbehagliche Ungedult, die mich überall hin verfolgen wird?"

"You must not attribute the desire to change, to that restless turbulent spirit, which would equally pursue me in every station in life; but to an honest desire to obviate the objection of malicious people, and essay whether occupation and change would not relieve my perturbed spirit."³⁰

The story does not suffer particularly from omissions in the hands of this author, for, with the exception of the one letter and a part of another where he seems to have followed Malthus,³¹ practically all of the text is attempted. On the other hand, the version is burdened with many moralizing footnotes and also with the insertion of letters and parts of letters. Thus, to Werther's letter dated May 22³² a long discourse on the subject of love is

²⁸ Book I, May 4.

²⁹ Book I, June 16.

³⁰ Book I, Aug. 22.

³¹ Book I, July 11, July 6.

³² Book I, May 22.

prefixed, which, though it conforms readily to Werther's frame of mind as he appears in the remainder of the letter, is indicative of the author's effort to stress the sentimental character of the story. Moreover, he objects seriously to Werther's idea of suicide, as is seen especially in his supplement to the text in the course of Albert's argument with Werther on the subject. He also feels it his duty to add the following characteristic note.³³

"Yet life is a loan from Heaven, and like the talent of the gospel should not be returned without improvement; if we are in a state of probation, it is highly criminal to fly in the face of him who sent us."

Several other portions of the story afford the author opportunity for comment. Thus, when Werther praises nature in one of his letters,³⁴ the following explanation is appended:

"Werter observed this maxim with profit, as his letters sufficiently evince. He was a pastoral poet of no mean genius; and some of his drawings, which are still extant, show him to have copied nature with accuracy."

This is one of his several efforts to convince his readers that Werther was not only a living character, but that he was a writer of some note. Although there may have been a belief in the real existence of such a character, there does not seem to have been any source from which any information of this kind might have been obtained. Further evidence of this effort on the part of the author is seen in scattered bits of verse in the text and especially in the two poems which are appended to the translation, one of which he claims to have found among Werther's papers. It is very probable, however, that these two poems belong to the list of anonymous "Werther poems" that appeared in England after the public became acquainted with the novel.

Two letters are inserted in the story. The first follows Werther's letter of August 30,³⁵ in which he appears a victim to despair and sees no end to his suffering but the grave. It consists of prose and verse, and shows Werther amusing himself with the contemplation of the effects his death would have upon Charlotte. The second letter is inserted immediately after Werther's letter of November 8,³⁶ and, like the first, is apparently an attempt to

³³ Book I, May 22.

³⁴ Book I, May 26.

³⁵ Book I, Aug. 30.

³⁶ Book II, Nov. 8.

have Werther more concerned with the thought of the future than he appears in the original.

This is one of the two translations of *Werther* containing the whole of the passage from Ossian. The English version is used rather than Goethe's. The author also quotes another passage from Ossian, when he uses the beginning of the "War of Inis-Thona" during Werther's visit to Charlotte on Sunday preceding Christmas.

That the author endeavors to give his readers something more than a mere translation of *Werther* is seen not only in his inventions and footnotes, but also in his lengthy treatment of Werther's character which he appends to the story. He praises the energetic and animated style of the book, but condemns the practice of suicide and wishes to impress the public with a more conservative view of life. He quotes from Thomas Warton's poem, "The Suicide," and also cites the case of the "ill-fated Hackman."³⁷ Although his was the first version made directly from the German, it is by no means as accurate a reproduction of Goethe's novel as Malthus's version from the French. This is largely due to the fact that the author was almost entirely concerned with the character of the story and paid so little attention to form. What we actually have is an annotated edition in which he saw fit to present *Werther* to the public in the light of his own interpretation. Being apparently aware of the unwholesome influence which many had attributed to the novel, he felt it incumbent upon him to warn his readers against any further evil tendencies that the book might have.

This translation did not receive any attention from the magazines. There was only one edition of it, and it was apparently not widely known.

John Gifford's version, the third translation, appeared in 1789. Gifford was a miscellaneous writer of considerable eminence and attainments. He was the founder of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*

³⁷ James Hackman, first a soldier and then a priest, fell desperately in love with Martha Ray, the mistress of Lord Sandwich and the mother of Basil Montagu. Upon her refusal to marry him, Hackman, in a fit of jealous despair, shot her as she was leaving the Covent Garden Theatre after the performance of *Love in a Village* on April 7, 1779. Hackman with another pistol endeavored to kill himself, but was only wounded. He was later hanged at Tyburn for the murder which he had committed. Cf. *Gent. Mag.* XLIX, p. 210.

and was a vigorous pamphleteer on the Tory side.³⁸ Nothing is recorded concerning any special interest that Gifford had in German literature. It is very probable that he did not know German at all; but his translations from French pamphlets and several years of residence in France may have induced him to translate *Werther* from the French, thus giving to the English public the second translation based upon Aubry's version.

Gifford states in the beginning that he has followed his predecessor in using the title, *The Sorrows of Werter*, though he is sure that *Passions* is infinitely more comprehensive. To him it seemed that the term, *Sorrows*, had greatly strengthened, if not absolutely given rise to, the popular error that the book was an apology for suicide. He is convinced, however, that Goethe meant that his work should have a directly opposite tendency.

A special feature attached to Gifford's version is the translation of a "Letter from a German of literary eminence to Monsieur Aubry" regarding the latter's version of *Werther*. This letter is quite important because it was written by Count von Schmettow,³⁹ to whom the authorship of the French translation of *Werther* had been ascribed, and because it comments upon the French translation before proceeding to give a general survey of German literature. Appell⁴⁰ and Oswald⁴¹ suggest Count von Schmettow rather than Aubry as the author of the French version, but in this letter Schmettow states that he did not know French, and that he only assisted Aubry. The French version, then, is apparently the product of two persons.

Gifford published the following interesting preface to his work: "The favourable reception which this work has experienced from the public will probably afford the most convincing proof of its intrinsic merit.—"Though the story of *Werter* labours under peculiar disadvantages, from a want of that diversity of characters which is generally deemed essential to the success of similar productions, and from a barrenness of events, which keeps the mind invariably attached to one object; yet it has not failed to fix attention and to secure applause. Its moral tendency has indeed been

³⁸ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* XXI. Cf. also *Gent. Mag.* LXXXVIII, pp. 279, 404.

³⁹ *Allgem. D. Biog.* XXXI; Meusel, *Lexicon*, XVII.

⁴⁰ Appell, p. 12.

⁴¹ Oswald, p. 54.

disputed through a misconception which, arising from a fervent zeal for the enforcement of morality, is more pardonable.—“Could the following work have been possibly construed into an apology for suicide, the present edition of it would most certainly have never appeared; but an idea so erroneous could only be promulgated by those who have attributed the sentiments of the hero to the author himself. The arguments of Werter, too, are but ill calculated for the purpose of deception: not sufficiently specious to impose on the most superficial mind, they can only be considered as the effusions of sensibility: as the ebullitions of genius under the despotick influence of passion.

“That the author of the work was innocent of the nefarious intentions that have been hastily imputed to him, is evident from the short address prefixed to the original edition.

“It is a rule in disputation—evidently found in reason—to allow each disputant to be the sole interpreter of his own arguments; and this indulgence should certainly be extended to authors; for, to accuse a man of entertaining sentiments which he openly disavows, is most assuredly a flagrant violation of justice. But, unfortunately, many modern moralists, with more pretended zeal than real discernment, have censured those authors as the apologists of suicide, whose works have supplied the most potent argument for the suppression of a crime at once so repugnant to religion and so pernicious to society.

“The following translation is taken from the genuine French edition of Monsieur Aubry, which is indisputably the best that has appeared. The letter prefixed to the work, at the same time that it conveys some idea of the state of literature in Germany will demonstrate the extreme difficulties that a foreigner must inevitably experience in the study of the German language; and which renders it almost impossible that he should acquire a sufficient knowledge of it to be able, without the assistance of a native, to give good translations of the best German authors.

“The translator having been careful, by occasional deviations from the *letter* effectually to preserve the *spirit* of the original, presumes that the present may claim a decided superiority over all former editions.”

Gifford's preface shows clearly that he had observed the general impression that *Werther* had made; and his attitude toward those who would judge the work altogether from the ethical standpoint

is quite evident. A clear conception of the form and spirit in which the novel was written, and a sympathetic attitude toward its author is also indicated. There is no statement that leads one to expect to find parts of the book suppressed through regard for the moralists of the time or the over-sensitive critic. We are disposed, therefore, at the outset, to look in Gifford's work for a more faithful and a more readable translation than one finds in the two preceding it. He had a distinct advantage in that Malthus had previously translated *Werther* from Aubry's version. He must have known Malthus's work and have naturally endeavored to improve upon the efforts of his predecessor. By a comparison, Gifford's translation is decidedly more valuable than Malthus's or the "Anonymous Translation of 1786." This is seen largely in his regard for the text and for form. In places his style is a little verbose, and his English is not so concise as one would desire, but he rarely fails to give the meaning of the original. The following specimen, a translation of a part of one of Werther's well-known letters, will serve to give an idea of his work:

"I will no longer submit myself to the conduct of guided who, instead of repressing the ardour of passion, only add fuel to fire. My heart is a torrent, the impetuosity of which I am unable to restrain; I only want, therefore, those soothing strains that can lull it to rest; and these Homer supplies in abundance. How often have I applied to him for comfort! How often by his harmonious numbers have I sought to cool the raging blood that seemed boiling within my veins."⁴²

With the exception of one letter,⁴³ which, as we have seen, was omitted in the two preceding versions, Gifford's work does not suffer from having mutilated the story. He seems to have followed Malthus in giving a small portion of the passage from Ossian and explains in a footnote that he has followed the example of the French version in omitting the greater part of Ossian "not from any respect to the author of Ossian, but merely that the story may suffer no unnecessary interruption."

Gifford was an experienced man of letters and performed his task with the proper attitude of a translator. He put aside any regard for the evil influence that the novel was presumed to have and proceeded to give a faithful representation of the original. Sympathetic as he was toward Goethe, and conscious of the duty

⁴² Book I, May 13.

⁴³ Book I, July 11.

of a translator, his work may be considered an important contribution. In spite of the fact that this version was made from the French, it is by no means a mediocre representation of the German text. It does not seem to have received any attention from the magazines, and, perhaps, was not widely known; but it was unquestionably a better translation of Goethe's novel than had been offered previously to the literary public.

The fourth translation, *The Letters of Werter*, appeared at Ludlow in 1799. It was published anonymously and was made directly from the German. The author published the following preface:

"The story of Werter should not be considered merely as an offspring of the imagination. The author has given, as he informs us, little more than the particulars of a fact within the circle of his own acquaintance. The son of the Abbé Jerusalem, a celebrated theologian of Brunswick, was the man whose passion for a lady of Wetzlar was attended with consequences so fatal. Goethe always chose his subjects from scenes of real life, which judicious preference has rendered his work truly energetic and interesting.

"Mr. Goethe has been represented as the apologist of suicide. But this charge can have been made only by such as have not distinguished the author from the work. By this method of seduction, would not the entire body of our tragic and epic writers be affected? That the author was not conscious of any such implication, appears evident from the short address prefixed to the original edition.

"The uncommon simplicity of the story and sublimity of diction have been universally allowed. In these respects the letters of Werter differ essentially from a novel. There is no variety of character, or of events, to raise the reader's expectation, and but one correspondent: it is Werter alone. Nature had infused a strong proportion of passion into his temper, and his feelings were too fine to support his load of distress. Let not the reader be offended, therefore, at his extravagance, but rejoice that Heaven has granted him a mind less susceptible of frailty, and more prepared to encounter the evils of life.

"In this edition a few passages, which appeared to lower the general extraordinary merit of the work, are omitted."

The chief criticism against this translation is that the author has injured the novel by leaving out various important parts. Not only are several paragraphs omitted which rob the reader of

some of the most forceful language in the book and also of some of the most enthusiastic outpourings of Werther's soul, but several important letters are omitted which are rather essential for a complete conception of the original. The letter dealing with Frau M and her stingy husband, and also the letter containing the incident of the crying child at the spring are omitted. The author was probably willing to follow former translators here. He is the first to omit the whole of Werther's letter pertaining to religion. The character of this and of some of the other parts unattempted shows, in part, the author's attitude toward the subject-matter of the book. He evidently took exception to the manner in which Werther expresses his religious sentiments and preferred to deprive his readers of this part of the novel. In the place of this letter he appropriates the greater part of a letter that was invented by the anonymous translator of 1786. He also discards two other letters which form an important part of the story. In the one, March 15,⁴⁴ Werther relates his experience at a dinner with the Count where objection is made to his presence, and he is requested to withdraw from the company of the nobility; in the other, March 16,⁴⁵ he describes his meeting with Fräulein B, who has heard him condemned and depreciated by the nobility, but expresses to him her sympathy. The interview increases his passion, and causes him to entertain thoughts of suicide. The omission of these two letters seriously injures the novel, since they are rather fundamental for a complete understanding of one of the motives which bring about Werther's tragic fate, namely: his humiliation on being excluded from association with higher classes. Although from the very beginning of the second part of the book one follows Werther's unhappy career in the service of the ambassador, and his growing displeasure in the more formal circles of diplomatic service, it is not until he is offended as one of the count's invited guests, that he is resolved to sever his relations from court-life. His pride is wounded, and the way is paved for his downfall. Therefore, an omission of these two letters leaves a conspicuous chasm in the thread of the story. The climax of Werther's diplomatic service, the more direct cause of his resignation is not seen. Moreover, the story is robbed of one of the best expressions of an age in which distinction between higher and lower classes was sharply drawn.

⁴⁴ Book II, March 15.

⁴⁵ Book II, March 16.

This part of the novel was not omitted by any of the other translators, and, therefore, the author could not have been influenced in this respect. It is possible, of course, that he regarded this part as detrimental to the general plan of the whole. One is reminded of Napoleon's criticism of the novel. After reading *Werther* with much interest and appreciation, Napoleon criticised the use of Werther's feeling of his false relation to society as one of the motives for bringing about this tragic fate.⁴⁶ Madame de Stael, however, took a different view of the novel, and saw in this complexity of motives one of the finest traits of the book.⁴⁷

With a few exceptions, the parts translated are a fair reproduction of the original, which shows that the author had considerable knowledge of German. Certain passages, however, are open to criticism, as the following will serve to illustrate:

"Lieber Wilhelm, ich habe allerley nachgedacht über die Begier in Menschen sich auszubreiten, neue Entdeckungen zu machen, herumzuschweifen; und dann wieder über den innern Trieb, sich der Einschränkung willig zu ergeben, und in dem Gleise der Gewohnheit so hinzufahren, und sich weder um rechts noch links zu bekümmern."

"Man unconscious of the riches which surround him, extends his view beyond his native clime, and wanders in search of new discoveries. Wearied or unsuccessful, he recalls his former habits, and his mind, like a spring extended to its utmost limits, inclines him to return to his former circle, and to enjoy that repose which activity and exertion have denied."⁴⁸

The author's work is deserving of some commendation. Excepting a few inaccuracies, no serious charges can be brought against him as an interpreter of German. It should be remembered, however, that when he began his work, he had the advantage of examining three translations which had already appeared. That he was acquainted with these, is shown, to some extent, in the character of his preface, and also in his adoption of several phrases. The chief fault, then, is the omission of several parts of the story which he saw fit to ignore, excusing himself on the ground that they lower the merit of the original. Although we may not question the sincerity of his judgment, it is evident, to anyone

⁴⁶ Napoleon to Goethe, Erfurt, Oct. 1808: "Das ist nicht naturgemäss und schwächt bei dem Leser die Vorstellung von dem übermächtigen Einfluss, den die Liebe auf Werther macht." Cf. Graef, p. 579.

⁴⁷ Her criticism appeared in *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, in 1799. Cf. Graef, p. 580.

⁴⁸ Book I, June 21.

acquainted with Goethe's novel, that he has modified Werther's character, and has failed to grasp a very vital part of the story. Were it not for such liberty, this work would compare favorably with that of others. But as it stands, it is a mutilated version, and fails to give one a complete idea of *Werther*.

This translation was probably not widely read. There was only the one edition of it, and it does not seem to have attracted any notice in the magazines. It could not have appealed to a public that was acquainted with the more complete version by Gifford.

The translation by William Render appeared in 1801.⁴⁹ The title page bearing the following poor rendering of the second stanza of Goethe's "Zu Werthers Leiden," is a warning against his ability as a translator:

"You weep—you love the youth—revere his name,
And wish from censure to defend his fame;
But hark! 'Be man,' his spirit seems to say,
'Not let my weakness tempt thy feet astray!'"

Render was a native German, grammarian and translator of some note.⁵⁰ He tells us in his preface that he was a student at Giessen with one of Charlotte's brothers. He also claims to have been well acquainted with Werther, and appends to his translation an interview which he had with him shortly before his death. About 1790 Render came to England, where he became known as a teacher of languages in several families of distinction. Toward the end of the century he taught German at Cambridge, Oxford and Edinburgh. Besides publishing several grammars and manuals he is the author of an English version of Kotzebue's *Graf Benjowsky*, and of Schiller's *Räuber*. Translations of *Don Carlos* and of *Maria Stuart* are also sometimes ascribed to him.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Seidensticker, *Poet-Lore*, II, p. 181, is in error when he says Render translated *Werther* in 1779. Goedeke records earlier translations by Render: one in 1789, published at Litchfield, and another at London in 1800. Appell and the British Museum Catalogue list only the one translation in 1801. However, the *Scots Magazine* in November, 1800, (LXII, p. 754) listed "*The Sorrows of Werter*, of Baron Goethe, translated from the last German edition, by William Render D. D., being the first translation of this story which has been made from the language in which it was originally written."

⁵⁰ *Dict. Nat. Biog.* XLVIII; *Allibone*, II.

⁵¹ Watt, *Bibliotheca Britannica*, II, p. 798, and Appell list these by Render. But neither Thomas Rea, *Schiller's Dramas and Poems in England* nor the British Museum Catalogue mention them.

Render published the following "Advertisement of the Translator:

"This new translation of the celebrated story of Werter has been undertaken chiefly from the consideration, that the edition which has been so universally read in this country was not immediately translated from the language in which the work was originally written, but from a mutilated translation published in France. In an edition which has thus been prepared through the medium of a second language, the spirit of the original not only was in a great measure evaporated, but many interesting passages and several entire letters were omitted; the translator has, therefore, been prompted to undertake his present task, no less by his respect for the taste of the British nation, than by his desire to do justice to the admirable talents of his friend the Baron Goethe.

"Another principal inducement was the circumstance of the translator's personal acquaintance with Werter, with Charlotte, and with their respective families. The residence of Charlotte was only a few miles from the place where he received his education, and one of her brothers was his fellow student in the University of Giessen, near Wetzlar. Indeed his interview with Werter a few days before his death, as described at the end of this volume, will unquestionably satisfy the reader that the present translator is in a peculiar manner qualified for the task of editing an English edition of this work."

Special interest attaches to Render's translation because of his familiarity with Germany and with the background of the story, and also because of his claims to friendship with Goethe, personal acquaintance with Charlotte, Werther and their families. The interview, which he claims to have had with Werther, took place during breakfast at Frankfort-am-Main, and was devoted chiefly to a discussion of suicide, upon which topic Render had preached a short time previously at Wetzlar. Werther objects to Render's views on the subject. The following is a fair sample of the conversation:

" 'Were this life,' replied Werter, 'such as you represent, no person would ever desire to quit it. It would be an earthly paradise. No young woman would drown herself in the neighborhood of Wetzlar; nor would any man abandon the best and dearest part of himself—the companion which nature has given him to constitute his bliss. No woman would disregard the affectionate attention which she can only receive from him whose heart is entwined

with her own. O! my Charlotte,' he exclaimed, 'why have the fates separated us? O! my friend, did I entertain such sentiments as you! Could I efface from my mind the impression which she has made!' 'Surely, Werter,' said I, 'did you only hope to do it, you might do it in reality. Hope, which gives so much consolation to man, is, I trust, not wholly a stranger to your bosom.' 'Ah! hope,' said he, 'there is no hope for me; which way, by what means can I obtain so salutary a remedy?' 'By time, Werter, by time and resolution.' 'Hope, time, and resolution,' he repeated, 'are three powerful agents.' "

While this interview shows a character in perfect conformity to the hero of Goethe's novel, one is inclined to question its authenticity. Render states in his preface that he was personally acquainted with Werther (Jerusalem) and Charlotte (Lotte Buff) and that one of his fellow students at the University of Giessen was Charlotte's brother. Let us look at the facts.

Jerusalem came to Wetzlar in September, 1771, and resided there until the date of his suicide in October, 1772. Lotte Buff, born in January, 1753, was only twenty years of age at the time of her marriage to Kestner in April, 1773. The oldest of her brothers, Hans, who, born in November, 1757, was not fifteen years of age at the time of Jerusalem's death, was presumably too young to have been at the university during Jerusalem's stay in Wetzlar.⁵² Therefore, Render's statement that Werther (Jerusalem) heard him preach at Wetzlar, and that he (Render) was a fellow student with Charlotte's brother at the university, would seem inconsistent, because, as a minister in Wetzlar, he could not have known Jerusalem and also have been at the same time in the university with Charlotte's brother. Thus, while we may be liberal enough to accept one or the other of his statements, we cannot accept both. The more probable interpretation is, that Render wished to establish relations with Werther's and Charlotte's families in order to increase his fame as man of letters and to advertise his translation.

Render was the first to use the second version of *Werther*, which Goethe published in 1787.⁵³ As stated in his preface, he knew the "mutilated translation" published in France and also Malthus's version. He probably was not acquainted with other former versions. Despite the motives, which, as he tells us, prompted

⁵² Cf. Herbst, *Goethe in Wetzlar*, pp. 64, 104; Wolff, *Blätter aus dem Werther-Kreis* pp. 28, 43; Kestner, *Goethe u. Werther*, p. 86. Wolff (p. 43) records that Charlotte's brother, Hans, was a Primaner in March, 1773.

⁵³ Gotzberg, Pratt, and Boylan also follow the second version.

his work, Render's translation is so deficient that it may be properly classed with the poorest. This is disappointing when one remembers that Render was not only a native German, but also a teacher of languages, and therefore, seemed particularly fitted for the task. But he evidently had little ability as a translator. His translation of Schiller's *Räuber* in 1799 is quite worthless;⁵⁴ and, comparatively speaking, the same is true of his translation of *Werther*. Besides expanding and omitting certain parts of the text, Render's great fault lies in the unlimited freedom which he has taken in rendering numerous passages with a view to embellishing his language. With this almost constant aim one notes a slovenly and inaccurate rendering of the German, and a failure to present any conception of the simple language which Goethe uses. Thus, after describing his meeting with the servant girl at the spring, Werther closes his letter:

"Sie dankte und stieg hinauf."

Render writes:

"She dropt me a lowly courtesy, which spoke abundance of thanks, and went her way. The sensations of my heart at the moment convinced me that I had done right."⁵⁵

Other passages illustrate this tendency, as the following:

"Was auf unserer Hereinfahrt vom Balle geschehen ist, habe ich noch nicht erzählt, habe auch heute keinen Tag dazu.

"Es war der herrlichste Sonnenaufgang! Der tröpfelnde Wald und das erfrischte Feld umher!"

"I don't know whether I told you—but it is no matter—it will bear the repetition. I shall never forget what passed as we returned from the ball. I have scarcely time to tell you today, but I will endeavour to resist the pleasure of beholding her a few moments, to convince you that, notwithstanding Charlotte, I have not entirely forgotten William.

"The God of day rose in all his splendour—the storm had cleared the atmosphere of all its vapours—and the face of nature seemed to be recovering as the pearly drops followed each other from the trees."⁵⁶

"Sie wollte das Mädchen mit ihrer Arbeit in das Nebenzimmer sitzen lassen; dann besann sie sich wieder anders."

"These unlucky events at first gave Charlotte uneasiness, but the consciousness of her own innocence at length inspired her with a noble and generous confidence, soaring beyond the narrow chimeras of Albert's brain, and sensible

⁵⁴ Thomas Rea, *Schiller's Dramas and Poems in England*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Book I, May 15.

⁵⁶ Book I, June 19.

of the unsullied chastity of her angelic heart, she rejected her first intention of causing her maid to remain in the room."⁵⁷

Nowhere is Render's liberty more apparent than in the closing paragraph where one gains no conception of the manner in which Goethe's story ends:

"As to his funeral, it took place with much solemnity, but with little pomp. Albert sincerely lamented his unhappy and untimely fate; from the eyes of Charlotte it long continued to drain inexhaustible showers of the tears of bitterness and sorrow. He was followed to the grave by the old Bailiff and his two sons, who sincerely regretted the loss of so faithful and valuable a friend.'

It is in the second part of the story that Render takes the most liberty in mutilating the text. Besides a number of short passages, there are longer ones omitted which rob the reader of some of the most effective parts of the book. For instance, the account of one of Werther's visits to Charlotte's father,⁵⁸ in which one notes Werther's particular fondness for children, is entirely ignored; and more serious than this is the omission of several paragraphs in which Goethe writes at length of Charlotte's attitude toward Albert and also toward Werther.⁵⁹ A small part of the English version of Ossian is given—the same as that which Malthus and Gifford included. One letter is entirely omitted,⁶⁰ but, on the other hand, this is the first translation to include the letter containing an account of Frau M and her husband.⁶¹

Render seems to have made his translation independently of any of his predecessors. Had he shown as much deference for the original as some of his predecessors, the existence of his translation would, perhaps, be justified. Instead, however, he declaims in his preface against the merits of Malthus's version, and trumpets forth the value of his own production. The results show, on the whole, a mediocre performance.

This translation was probably not well known in England. It seems probable that the several editions of Malthus's version which had appeared by 1801, were used largely by the public for an acquaintance with *Werther*. Render's work, however, became known in America when a reprint of his translation, to

⁵⁷ Cotta ed. p. 104.

⁵⁸ Cotta ed. p. 102-103.

⁵⁹ Cotta ed. p. 103-104.

⁶⁰ Book II, Feb. 8.

⁶¹ Book I, July 11.

which is annexed the *Letters of Charlotte* and a lengthy discourse on suicide by William Paley, appeared at Boston in 1807.

One magazine gave a brief notice of Render's translation. The *Monthly Mirror*⁶² said: "Dr. Render's abilities as a translator have had the tribute of our approbation in a former number. Perhaps there was no necessity for a new translation of this work; and we are afraid that much good is not done to society by the diffusion of a book, the morality of which is at least questionable, to say no worse of it. Dr. Render, however, has published an appendix which communicates some particulars of an interview had with Werter a little before his death. This addition is not interesting and it hardly affords an excuse for offering another edition of Goethe's novel to the public."

Frederick Gotzberg, "assisted by an English Literary gentleman," published in 1802 a translation with the quotation: "One that lov'd not wisely but too well."⁶³ Of the several translations this has the distinction of being the product of two persons, neither of them being known. Gotzberg, as we learn in the preface, was a native German, ranking "foremost among the literati of his country," but he was not of sufficient eminence to be mentioned in any of the biographical dictionaries. As seen in the preface, we have another author claiming acquaintance with Werther's family, thinking, perhaps, as Render, that this would advertise his translation:

"Few are acquainted with the history of *Werter*; the celebrity which attended its first publication naturally excited the curiosity of distant readers, and consequently produced several translations of it, both in England and France. In England, *Werter* has appeared in a variety of dresses, but the clothing seldom corresponded with the original. This may be easily accounted for—it was translated from the French by some who were unacquainted with the German language, and having lost a considerable portion of its spirit by the first change, we may naturally conclude that it entirely evaporated in the second. Others have literally translated it from the original; but in this close adherence we find more puerility than simplicity, more folly than pathos. Of the former translators, it must be observed, that though English scholars,

⁶² *Monthly Mirror* XII, (1801) p. 102.

⁶³ *Othello*, V. 2.

yet from their ignorance of the German language, and being consequently obliged to refer to another translation of the work, they have in many parts perverted the meaning, and given Werter a dress that is not his own; and of the latter, their being unacquainted with the English idiom, has rendered them incapable of conveying the original meaning to the English reader—this half-dress makes our hero appear more the subject of mirth than of pity. From these preliminary remarks, the present translation may be thought to come from the pen of one who is well acquainted with both languages; but, in truth, it is the production of two persons. Frederick Gotzberg is a native of Germany, had some knowledge of Werter's family, and ranks foremost among the literati of his country. How far this admired German history has been rendered an affecting tale, must be left to the decision of a candid and impartial public."

It is not known who the "English literary gentleman" was that assisted Gotzberg, but he was probably the author of this preface. It is evident that he was acquainted with the history of *Werther* in England, and, while the title of the work places him somewhat in the background, the general character of the translation leads me to ascribe a considerable portion to the hand of an Englishman. Several parts of the work would seem to point to this. For example, the author refuses to translate the letter containing Werther's sentiments on religion and suicide,⁶⁴ because, as he explains in a note, it somewhat accords with his own views. He refers to Werther's arguments with Albert on suicide as being "fallacious"; and to one letter, August 8,⁶⁵ in which the same subject is mentioned, he appends: "This argument is very fallacious, as are all Werther's arguments on this subject. Suicide has ever been deemed the act of a weak mind." References of this kind indicate the work of an Englishman rather than a native German, and also show that for this author, the novel became, to a certain extent, an ethical question.

Gotzberg apparently followed Rander in making this translation. This is seen in his omission of Werther's brief letter of February 8,⁶⁶ and also in the second part of the story where the parts omitted coincide practically with Rander's work. There are also several

⁶⁴ Book II, Nov. 15.

⁶⁵ Book II, Aug. 8.

⁶⁶ Book II, Feb. 8.

passages showing only slight deviation from Render's 'language. However, the author's inventive powers are not so great as Render's; nor does his work show where he labored to express the original in such pretentious language. His translation, however, shows considerable freedom in handling the text and a limited knowledge of German. Thus, he translates the last part of Werther's well-known letter of June 16:

" 'Charlotte, now reclining her head upon her lovely arm, fixed her expressive eyes on the surrounding country—then raised them to Heaven, and let them fall upon me—I saw them bedewed with a tear! she placed her hand gently upon mine, and in a tone of energy cried—'O! Klopstock.' My heart throbbed at the name—I felt a thousand sensations—. His divine poem rushed to my recollection, and increased my ardent love for her, whose sentiments are so congenial with mine—'Oh! Klopstock!' I could no more than echo the name—my spirits were exhausted.' ”⁶⁷

Here the text is expanded and the simplicity of the language is missed. That Klopstock was known chiefly in England as the author of *Messias*⁶⁸ is seen in the rendering of "herrlichen Ode" as "divine poem" when the reference is to the famous ode, *Frühlingsfeier*. Render and Pratt also made this error.

Further illustration of injustice to the original may be seen in the following:

"Was Lotte einem Kranken sein muss, fühl' ich an meinem eigenen Herzen, das übler dran ist als manches, das auf dem Siechbette verschmachtet. Sie wird einige Tage in der Stadt bei einer rechtschaffener Frau zubringen die sich nach der Aussage der Aerzte ihrem Ende naht und in diesen letzten Augenblicken Lotten um sich haben will."

"There is a worthy old lady in the town, has been given over by her physician, and expressed a desire that Charlotte should be with her during her last moments. She is accordingly gone, and I am conscious, is truly capable of administering balmy consolation to the sick, for I have been myself indisposed."⁶⁹

Gotzberg follows his predecessors in giving only a small part of the passage from Ossian. But unlike them, he paraphrases in verse the original. His efforts may be seen in the following brief specimen:

"Alone, on the sea-beaten rock,
My daughter was heard to complain,
Loud and frequent, alas! were her sighs—
The father's assistance was vain!"

⁶⁷ Book I, June 16.

⁶⁸ An English translation by Mary and Joseph Collier was completed in 1771.

⁶⁹ Book I, July 1.

One notes occasional passages in this translation that are fairly successful, but the work, on the whole, is not to be commended. This is largely because several parts of the novel are dogmatically unattempted, and also, because of a deficient knowledge of German, various parts are loosely and inaccurately rendered. With these facts, it is difficult to see how anyone could obtain through this version a complete idea of Goethe's novel.

No reviews of this translation appeared in the magazines. However, it became known through two reprints: it was published in Cassell's National Library in 1886,⁷⁰ and has also been published here in America by the Educational Publishing Company in 1899.⁷¹

The next translation was published in 1809 by Dr. Pratt, better known, perhaps, as Samuel Jackson Pratt, or as "Courtney Melmoth," which name he used for a number of years as an actor and writer. Pratt was a novelist, poet, and the author of no less than thirty-one plays. While there are extensive accounts of his life and writings, there is practically no record of his having any special interest in German literature. The *Dictionary of National Biography*⁷² states that a translation of *Werther* is attributed to him. It is probably true that Pratt was especially interested in sentimental literature. The *Gentleman's Magazine*⁷³ says: "his chief error consisted in not knowing how to check the exuberance of his feeling and imagination; and that therefore he sometimes diffused his sentiments to a tedious extent. His works were all intended to promote the interest of virtue."

Pratt published the following preface:

"Few publications of the novel kind have always enjoyed more celebrity than the one before us. It was originally translated into French, and then into English; since then it has been done from the German. There is occasionally a discordancy between those rival productions, and many parts have been misconceived, or added to by the ingenuity of the translators. The present edition has been printed with a view to combine not only the real

⁷⁰ Vol. 36. Cf. *Brit. Mus. Cat.*

⁷¹ This American reprint is apparently not widely known. Since it is not listed by Wilkens, it probably appeared after his article in 1899. Oswald (p. 57) records "The Sorrows of Werther, Educational Pub. Co. Boston, 1904," but I have been informed by the publishers that this is an error.

⁷² *Dict. Nat. Biog.* XLVI. Cf. also *Notes & Queries*, S. 6, VI, p. 212.

⁷³ *Gent. Mag.* LXXXIV, (1814) p. 398.

force and sentiment of Werter, as they are given by Mr. Goethe, but as a more perfect model of the author's manner, which has been perverted, and often misconceived.

"It is evident that Mr. Goethe is much attached to the simple scene of domestic life and rural scenery, many of which are here drawn with a most interesting and masterly hand. He esteems the *Vicar of Wakefield* for this cause, though the characters of the different heroes are drawn diametrically opposite. It has been objected to in this work that Mr. Goethe is the champion of Suicide. The reader will best judge how far this is true or not. Certain it appears that Albert's arguments in reply to Werter on this head are weak compared with those of his antagonist; but it must be considered that it is the history of Werter which is written, and that it was not the intention to convince him, by force of Albert's arguments, of the gross absurdity and cowardice of that practice, to which his irritable and romantic mind constantly tended. Werter was amiable, but he was weak; he had a strong mind in certain particulars; but it was in others little better than a lucid insanity. He loved where religion and prudence forbade his passion, and died in conformity to that erroneous reasoning which made him pursue Charlotte, when, in the first instance, he was informed she was devoted to another."

Despite Pratt's excuse for a new translation, as he states in his preface, it may be questioned whether his work serves the author's purpose. An examination of his version will not convince one that he has succeeded in accomplishing what he had in mind. From the standpoint of language and style his work is fairly attractive, but it is more of Pratt than of Goethe. This, like Rander's translation, is characterized by an unusual display of vocabulary; and Pratt, too, finds difficulty in confining himself to the text. Thus, for a part of Werther's letter of November 26,⁷⁴ in which he praises Albert, Pratt writes:

"So eine, wahre, warme Freude ist nicht in der Welt, als eine grosse Seele zu sehen, die sich gegen einen öffnet."

"The unreserved confidence of such a mind as his, while it is highly gratifying has a tendency to soften the pains which throb in a heart constituted like your friends—you have long known its failings, and I am sure will draw a veil over them."

Likewise, the simplicity of Goethe's words after Werther has finished reading Ossian is lost when Pratt writes:

⁷⁴ Book II, Nov. 26.

"Die ganze Gewalt dieser Worte fiel über den Unglücklichen."

"The pointed allusion of those words to the situation of Werter rushed with all the electric rapidity of lightning to the inmost recesses of his soul."⁷⁵

Besides enlarging from time to time upon the idea presented in the German, there are many passages which Pratt fails to understand. In some of these he shows that he was influenced by Rander and Gotzberg. For example, he translates the last part of Werther's letter of July 11 incorrectly:

"Ich redete mit Lotten über die unglaubliche Verblendung des Menschen sinns, dass einer nicht argwohnen soll, dahinter müsse was stecken, wenn eins mit sieben Gulden hinreicht, wo man den Aufwand vielleicht um zweimal so viel sieht. Aber ich habe selbst Leute gekannt, die des Propheten ewiges Oelkrüglein ohne Verwunderung in ihrem Hause angenommen hätten."

"The severe and pointed reprobation of Charlotte on this avaricious disposition, which had made the poor gentlewoman 'rob Peter to pay Paul,' was not forgotten. 'The starving stipend of this wretch,' said she, 'was perhaps supposed to be increased by the industry of the wife, who augmented it like the wonderful increase of the widow's pitcher.'"⁷⁶

Pratt's translation cannot be condemned as having seriously mutilated the novel. He follows Rander and Gotzberg in omitting one letter, February 8, and also the greater part of Ossian. Like Gotzberg he paraphrases Ossian in verse, but a brief specimen will show that his efforts here are even more painful than Gotzberg's:

"Alone on the briny-lay'd rock
My daughter exclaimed in her woe,
For help and her father she call'd—
Her father no help could bestow."

Although Pratt may be credited with an effort to interpret most of the story, his work, on the whole, cannot be called an ideal translation of *Werther*. But in spite of his deficiencies as a translator, the fact that he put aside all ethical consideration of the novel, shows a commendable and marked improvement in attitude over some of his predecessors.

This translation was published several times.⁷⁷ While it may have attracted the general public, it received no attention from the magazines.

⁷⁵ Cotta ed. p. 111.

⁷⁶ Book I, July 11.

⁷⁷ Goedeke records three editions by Pratt: the first without date; the second, revised and compared with all the former editions, 1809; the third

The last translation of *Werther* was made by R. Dillon Boylan in 1854, and was published in a volume of Bohn's Standard Library containing other translations from Goethe by the same author. The following preface appeared with the translation:

"It is somewhat remarkable that the *Sorrows of Werther*, notwithstanding its great popularity, has never before been translated from the German into the English language. The translation by which the work has become familiarized in this country, was made from the French, a medium wholly incapable of maintaining the vigorous strength of the original. Well may it be styled 'a faint and garbled version,' by a competent authority. . . . The story of *Werther* is known to be the narration of an actual fact which happened within the knowledge of the author; and though it has been sometimes affirmed that Goethe subsequently smiled at this performance of his youth, yet he has left on record an account of his own state of mind during its composition, which is well worthy of perusal."⁷⁸

The author errs, of course, in stating that *Werther* had never before been translated directly from German into English. His statement seems to show how little the former translations were known in England excepting Malthus's version from the French, concerning which he quotes from Carlyle.⁷⁹

Boylan's translation was made at a time when the study of German had made considerable progress in England, and one is not surprised to find his version of *Werther* far superior to all others. He had established a favorable reputation as a translator from the German with the appearance of his version of *Wilhelm Meister* in 1846, and of *Don Karlos* in 1847. His love of accuracy,

edition, 1813. The British Museum Catalogue lists a translation by Pratt in 1809, a second edition in 1813 (?), and a reprint in 1823. The New York Public Library contains an American reprint published in 1807, which is the same text as the above edition of 1809. Also the Library of Cornell University contains a translation by Pratt dated 1813, and following Malthus's translation as far as the letter of July 6, Book I. The remainder of the text is identical with the American reprint of 1807 and also with 1809 London version. It would seem, then, that Pratt translated *Werther* as early as 1807, and that these so-called editions are mere reprints of the first.

⁷⁸ The preface ends with Goethe's well-known statement in *Dichtung u. Wahrheit*, Book XIII.

⁷⁹ Cf. preface to *Wilhelm Meister*.

his consciousness of the imperative duty of a translator to render faithfully, so far as it is possible, and his excellent knowledge of German, entitled him to praise. That these are the qualifications with which he executed his task, is evident upon an examination of his work.

One is impressed with the completeness of this version. Not a single letter in the novel is omitted. The entire passage from Ossian is included, which, as we have seen, was largely omitted in all the former translations excepting the "Anonymous Translation of 1786." But as that translation does not seem to have been widely read, a complete passage from Ossian, as it appears in *Werther*, was most likely not known to English readers until the appearance of Boylan's work.

So far as I have been able to discover, there are only two errors in Boylan's interpretation. In *Werther*'s letter of July 6 the phrase, "das der Mann vor acht Tagen hatte taufen lassen,"⁸⁰ is rendered incorrectly, "that this very man had been baptized only a week before." The remainder of the letter is translated correctly, and it seems strange that he failed to understand this phrase. The second error is found in the letter dated September 3, where he interprets, "Ich begreife manchmal nicht, wie sie ein andrer lieb haben kann, lieb haben darf,"⁸¹ as, "I sometimes cannot understand how she can love another, how she dares love another." Gifford's translation is the only one which gives the proper meaning to this simple sentence. All others have taken "ein andrer" as the object instead of the subject here.

However, of all the translations of *Werther*, Boylan shows the greatest ability to grasp the spirit in which the novel is written. The fact that other authors had to wrestle frequently with *Werther*'s thoughts and feelings naturally led to inaccuracy of expression and to a somewhat distorted view of the original. But Boylan's effort to reproduce *Werther*'s mental state and to convey Goethe's ideas with adequate effect, must be pronounced, on the whole, remarkably successful. Nowhere is this better exemplified than in his translation of *Werther*'s letter of May 10, from which the following is taken:

"A wonderful serenity has taken possession of my entire soul, like these sweet mornings of spring which I enjoy with my whole heart.

⁸⁰ Book I, July 6.

⁸¹ Book II, Sept. 3.

"I am alone, and feel the charming existence in this spot, which was created for the bliss of souls like mine. I am so happy, my dear friend, so absorbed in the exquisite sense of mere tranquil existence, that I neglect my talents. I should be incapable of drawing a single stroke at the present moment, and yet I feel that I never was a greater artist than now. When the lovely valley teems with vapour around me, and the meridian sun strikes the upper surface of the impenetrable foliage of my trees, and but a few strong gleams steal into the inner sanctuary, then I throw myself down in the tall grass by the trickling stream, and as I lie close to the earth, a thousand unknown plants discover themselves to me. When I hear the buzz of the little world among the stalks, and grow familiar with the countless indescribable forms of the insects and flies, then I feel the presence of the Almighty, who formed us in His own image, and the breath of that universal love which bears and sustains us, as it floats round us in an eternity of bliss."⁸²

This passage is representative of the feeling and regard which Boylan has for the original. The various peculiarities and intricacies of thought and style are reproduced with as much skill as one may reasonably expect of a translator. There is no attempt to embroider the original with the translator's fancies; but a keen insight into Werther's philosophy of life, and an effort to express it with simplicity comparable to the original is generally apparent. It may be said, then, that in this version, form assumes, for the first time, its real importance. Despite the fact that a certain critic speaks of this work as "painfully labored in which the throb and glow of the story's impassioned language are smothered and cooled into a decorously spasmodic language,"⁸³ it is, on the whole, the most worthy and reliable version of *Werther* that has appeared.

When Boylan published his translation no attention was paid it in the magazines, doubtless because of the fact that interest in *Werther* had become historical rather than critical. However, his translation has become deservedly popular through the several reprints that have appeared in England and America.

The attempt in this discussion has been to give a general idea of the character of the several English translations of *Werther*. We have seen that the translation from the French in 1779 first introduced Goethe to the English public, and that three more translations were published before the end of the century. Of these four versions, which appeared between 1779 and 1799, three appeared anonymously, whose authors, judging by the character of the several parts omitted, seem to have considered *Werther*

⁸² Book I, May 10.

⁸³ Boyesen, *Goethe and Schiller*, N. Y. 1904, p. 43.

largely from the ethical point of view. The 1799 Ludlow translation, however, went farther and omitted a large portion of one of the guiding motives of the book. Two versions, the first in 1779, and that by Gifford in 1789, were based upon the French translation of Aubry. It is noteworthy that among these first four versions, they give the most complete idea of the novel, particularly that of Gifford who was an experienced man of letters.

The nineteenth century brought four more versions, three of which appeared in the first decade, and which, because of the author's weak knowledge of German and a disregard for the text, are by no means adequate. Finally, when the study of German had made considerable progress in England, Boylan's version appeared in 1854, which is clearly entitled to claim superiority over all others.

ORIE W. LONG.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute.